Met Office hosts NASA International Space Apps Challenge

23 April 2012 - Over the weekend the Met Office hosted the lead European event for the NASA International Space Apps Challenge.

The event was opened by Nick Skytland, Programme Manager for NASA Open Government Initiative.

Nick said: "It's been great to be here collaborating with the Met Office and all of the supporting organisations. The Met Office truly represents the future of using Open Data and Open Source to drive initiative across government."

Teams at the event participated in challenges including #hazardmap - looking at harnessing real-time information from social media during natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes and #predictthesky - an app to predict when cloud conditions would enable you to watch astronomical phenomena such as meteor showers.

The judges were impressed by the collaboration and progress made on all of the challenges. The two winning solutions, decided by a panel of judges from ShelterBox, Mubaloo, Plymouth University and the Met Office, were #growersnation and #welovedata. These will now be judged against other winning challenges globally, with winners announced in the next few weeks.

#growersnation, an app to determine what produce will grow given local soil characteristics and weather conditions, stood out because of its humanitarian potential for third world countries and the way in which the team crowdsourced information from other NASA challengers across the globe.

#welovedata developed a device that would warn hay fever and asthma sufferers when the next days pollen count was expected to be high. This caught the judges imagination because of its potential to make data accessible and useful to millions of allergy sufferers.

Sarah Weller, Marketing Manager at Mubaloo, said: "We are thrilled to have been able to judge the Space Apps challenge at the Met Office. The challenge has really highlighted how much can be achieved in such a short space of time, especially with the use of crowdsourcing and open source data which proved vital to all of the teams involved."

Perhaps one of the more unusual challenges was undertaken by Jon Spooner, from Unlimited Space Agency, who attempted to "hack his way into space using a secret launch point alleged to be hidden somewhere in the Met Office". It is likely you will hear much more of Jon's exploits over the next few weeks.

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